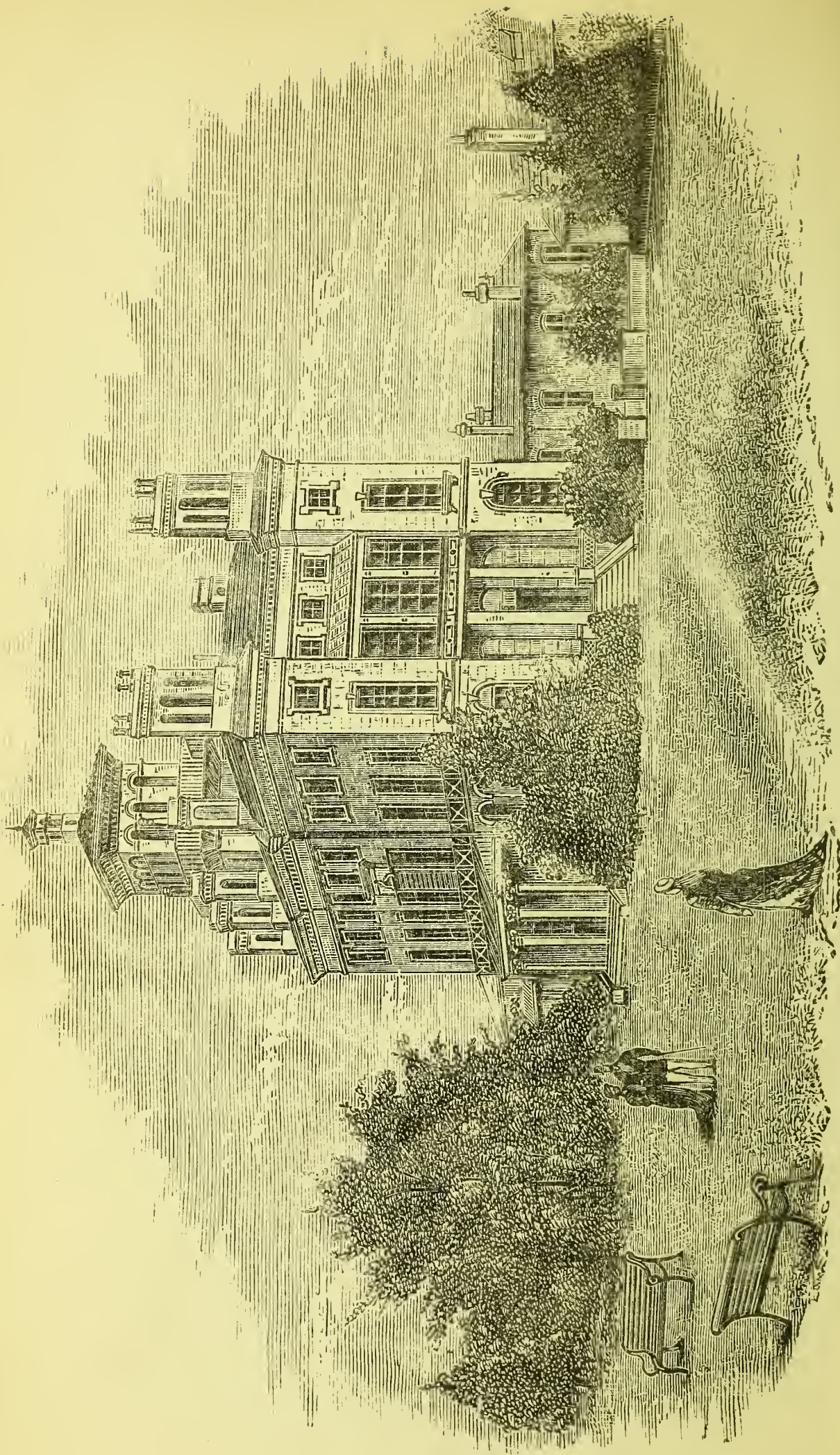


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THE EASTERN COUNTIES' ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS, COLCHESTER.

THE IDIOT;  
HIS PLACE IN CREATION,  
AND  
HIS CLAIMS ON SOCIETY.

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BY

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*Author of "Aphasia and the Localisation of the Faculty of Language;"*

*"Darwinism Tested by Language;" &c.*

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DEDICATED TO

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NORFOLK,  
EARL MARSHAL OF ENGLAND.

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THE following essay formed the subject matter of an address delivered in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, on the occasion of a public meeting held in support of the Eastern Counties' Asylum for Idiots, under the presidency of His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of England.

At that meeting, a wish was expressed that I should republish my address. Personally, I felt that it contained nothing worthy of further publicity, but as others have thought differently, in deference to their wishes, and also in compliance with a special request from the Board of Directors of the Asylum, it is here reproduced, with a few additional thoughts which time did not permit me to develop at the public meeting.

FREDERIC BATEMAN.

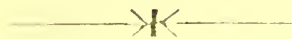
UPPER ST. GILES' STREET,  
NORWICH,  
*January, 1882.*



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THE IDIOT;  
HIS PLACE IN CREATION,  
AND  
HIS CLAIMS ON SOCIETY.



As the Consulting Physician to the Eastern Counties' Asylum for Idiots, it is my privilege to urge upon this meeting the claims of one of the most important charities connected with this district, and which, as such, is calculated to excite an especial interest in the city of Norwich and throughout the county of Norfolk.

The Eastern Counties' Asylum for Idiots is an institution founded specially for the

reception of patients from Norfolk and the three other Eastern Counties, just in the same way as the Royal Albert Asylum, at Lancaster, is intended for patients from the seven northern counties. It is, therefore, essentially a Norfolk charity, and I dwell especially on this point, because, being situated at Colchester, I think there is an impression in certain quarters, that this institution is less intimately connected with this locality than some other charities, the claims of which are periodically brought under our notice. I feel that the managing body themselves have been to blame for this impression, from having in the first instance adopted the ill-advised name of Essex Hall—a name, however, now abandoned, as tending to convey the impression that it was an Essex charity, whereas, as I have before said, it is an institution intended for the care and treatment of Idiots from the four Eastern Counties, of which Norfolk is the largest and the most populated.

I have so often been called upon to plead the cause of this charity before a Norfolk

audience, that I should have preferred that some other person had been selected to represent the Asylum at this meeting, for when the subject of the appeal is always the same, it is difficult to prevent one's thoughts from occasionally running in a similar channel as on former occasions ; the Board of Directors having, however, invited me to act as one of their deputation, I acceded to their request with the greater readiness, as it affords me the opportunity, on the part of the authorities of the Asylum, of expressing our grateful thanks to his Grace the Duke of Norfolk for the honour he has done us by his presence here to-day, thus evincing the interest he takes in the charitable institutions of the county, by consenting to preside over a public meeting in the historical city of Norwich.

In the few words that I shall address to you, I wish particularly to avoid falling into the error common to many speakers—that of exaggerating the importance of the subject they are treating. Many a good cause has been damaged by the indiscretion

of its own advocates, who, in their undue zeal, endeavour to impress their audiences with the notion that the particular charity for which they plead is the one above all others that has a paramount claim on the support of a philanthropic public. Now, I have no desire to produce a sensational effect, or to create an artificial interest in my subject by indulging in the language of hyperbole. I have a plain unvarnished tale to tell, that requires no meretricious adornment to arrest your attention, for I am here to plead the cause of an unfortunate branch of the human family, who, by the very nature of their infirmity, are unable to say a single word for themselves. Happily, we live in an age when the spirit of philanthropy is abroad, and all that Christian sympathy can suggest is being done to relieve the sick and suffering poor; hospitals and asylums are springing up in every locality, and Norfolk is certainly no exception to the rule, abounding, as it does, in charitable institutions of every description, the object of which is to improve the condition of the

labouring class, and to lessen the ills that flesh is heir to; and it may truly be said, as far as this country is concerned, that—

“The quality of mercy is not strain’d;  
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath; it is twice bless’d:  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.”

Whilst admitting all this, I maintain that there is an unfortunate class—that of idiots—which has not hitherto received that share of attention to which it is entitled, and I think this apparent neglect is mainly due to a misconception as to the nature of idiocy, and as to the amount of amelioration of which the subjects of this unfortunate infirmity are susceptible. It is with the view of removing this erroneous impression, that I have been requested to say a few words to you about idiocy, from a scientific point of view, leaving to the Superintendent of the Asylum the task of giving you some detailed information as to the internal management of the institution. In the few remarks that I shall make to you,

I hope to show you that the study of idiocy is fraught with interest, not only to the man of science and the philanthropist, but to the political economist, the statesman, and the theologian.

#### DEFINITION OF IDIOCY.

Great confusion exists in the public mind as to the nature of idiocy. What is an idiot? Dr. Seguin, a celebrated writer on this subject, has described idiocy as a "specific infirmity of the cerebro-spinal centre," a definition which I need not say applies to a variety of infirmities to which flesh is heir, and such a definition only serves as a cloak for ignorance. Shakespeare, when he speaks of an idiot as "one who holds his bauble for his God," and again as "one who tells a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," is to a certain extent true to nature; but neither he nor the psychologists of his day knew enough of the natural history of the idiot to attempt a logical definition.

As I have spent a great deal of time in the investigation of obscure points of cerebral pathology, of course the question of the idiot has not escaped my attention, and I would define idiocy as an infirmity consisting, anatomically, of a defective organisation and want of development of the brain, resulting in an inability, more or less complete, for the exercise and manifestation of the intellectual, moral, and sensitive faculties. There are various shades and degrees of this want of development, from those whose mental and bodily deficiencies differ but slightly from the lowest of the so-called sound-minded, to those individuals who simply vegetate, and whose deficiencies are so decided as to isolate them, as it were, from the rest of nature.

The first idiot that attracted the attention of scientific men was looked upon as a savage man, and every treatise on the subject contains some allusion to the so-called savage of the Aveyron, who excited so much curiosity, speculation, and interest

among the psychologists of Paris in the early part of the present century.

In old books on medical nomenclature, idiocy was classed amongst the varieties of insanity, and the visitor to a lunatic asylum, half a century ago, would find the idiot skulking in the corner of a courtyard, chained to a staple, and lying on a litter of straw; in fact, he was considered and treated more like a wild beast than a human being. He had but little talent given, and by neglect or abuse that little was lost, until, growing more and more brutal, he sank unregretting and unregretted into an early grave, without ever being counted as a man. Now, idiocy is not a form of insanity, and it is most important that no confusion should exist in the public mind upon this point, as the association of idiots and insane patients in the same asylum is a disadvantage to both classes. I desire especially to press this point upon the legislators of the country, and, as in this county, our union houses are far too large for the require-

ments of the age, I would suggest that one or more of them might, with advantage, be devoted to the care and treatment of pauper idiots.

Insanity is a loss more or less complete of faculties formerly possessed—it consists of a perturbation of the mental faculties after their complete development, or, as a noted French psychologist has beautifully put it, “*L’homme en démence est privé des biens dont il jouissait autrefois, c’est un riche devenu pauvre. L’idiot a toujours été dans l’infortune et la misère.*” (The man that is mad is deprived of possessions which he formerly enjoyed, it is a rich man become poor; whereas the idiot has always been in misfortune and misery.) The distinction between the idiot and the insane is clear and marked. The madman suffers from abnormal development of brain, the idiot from an ill-developed brain—the mind of the madman is not in proper balance, in the idiot it is not in proper power. The poor idiot (the word being derived from the Greek

ιδιώτης\*) is alone in the world; isolated as it were from the rest of nature, he sees but does not perceive, he hears but does not understand or appreciate, he cares for nothing, and is alike indifferent to the grandeur as to the beauties of nature; he stands unmoved at the thunder clap, the foam of the rushing cataract, or the roar of the mighty ocean; he heeds not the hum of the insect world or the song of the early lark, that winged chorister of the air; the star-bejewelled canopy of heaven, the

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\* This term is applied by the Greek writers to a person unpractised or unskilled in anything—one who has no professional knowledge, whether of politics or any other subject, and it seems to have corresponded with our word layman; thus, Thucydides, in describing the plague that broke out at Athens during the Peloponnesian War, in speaking of a physician and a layman, uses the phrase *ιατρός καὶ ιδιώτης*; Plato also uses the word in the same sense (Legg. 933 D), and the same author, in contrasting a poet with a prose-writer, uses the phrase, “*ἐν μέτρῳ ὡς ποιητῆς, ἢ ἄνευ μέτρου ὡς ιδιώτης*” (Phaedr. 258 D). I doubt very much the appropriateness of the word idiot as applied to these unfortunate creatures, and I think the American term of Feeble-minded more correctly represents their condition.

mountain landscape lighted up with all the purple splendour of the setting sun, all these are nothing to him—he is a soul shut up in imperfect organs.

## CAUSES OF IDIOCY.

It will be utterly impossible, in the short time allotted to me, to enter at any length upon the various causes of idiocy, a study of which is, however, fraught with many a useful lesson. Suffice it to say that as the cause is always antecedent to any personal history of the child, idiocy is never dependent on the idiot himself, who has never become so through any vices of his own, and is therefore more an object for commiseration than certain lunatics, who, in many instances, have become so through faults of their own. As to the social aspect of idiocy, it recognises no distinction of rank; it may occur in the homes of the affluent or in the hovels of the most indigent. Idiocy is found in all civilised countries, but it is not an evil necessarily inherent

in society, and is the result of the violation of natural laws, in some way or other, and at some time or other, and the effect may not show itself for two or three generations. A very large class of persons ignore the conditions upon which health and reason can co-exist; they pervert the natural appetites of the body, and the natural emotions of the mind, and thus bring down the awful consequences of their own ignorance upon the heads of their unoffending children.

One of the most fruitful causes of idiocy is the *abuse*—mark, I do not say the *proper use*—of alcoholic stimulants, which tends to bring families into a low and feeble condition, which thus becomes a prolific cause of idiocy in their children. From a report on idiocy, by Dr. Howe and other Commissioners appointed by the Governor of Massachusetts to ascertain the causes of this calamity in that State, it is stated that “out of 359 idiots, the condition of whose progenitors was ascertained, 99 were the children of inveterate drunkards;” and the report goes on to say further, that when

the parents were not actually habitual drunkards, yet amongst the idiots of the lower class, not one quarter of the parents could be considered as temperate persons. From a recent table drawn up by Dr. Kerlin, an American physician, in which the causes of the infirmity are given in 100 cases of idiotic children, I observe that in 38 of the number, intemperance on the part of the parents is traced as an accessory, main, direct, or indirect cause.

At the annual meeting of the British Medical Association, held last year at Cambridge, Dr. Fletcher Beach read a paper on the Intemperance of Parents as a predisposing cause of idiocy in children. In 430 patients, he was enabled to trace a history of parental intemperance in 138 cases, or 31·6 per cent.; of this number, 72 were males and 66 females.”\*

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\* The question of the influence of alcoholic stimulants on the development of mental disease formed a prominent feature in the proceedings of this congress, and it is also a subject which is just now engaging the attention of pathologists in all parts of the world.

Just now that the attention of the Legislature is being prominently called to the treatment of habitual drunkards, it cannot be too widely known that their innocent offspring are but too frequently the victims of the brutish excesses of their parents, who, a few years ago, were well described by the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, when receiving a deputation on the subject, as not quite criminals nor quite lunatics, although nearly approaching both classes in many cases. The above statistics fully corroborate the pertinency of Sir Richard Cross's remarks. I do not

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In France, M. Lunier, Inspector of Asylums, has shown that the departments in which the consumption of alcohol had increased most, were those in which there had been a corresponding increase of insanity.

In Sweden, Dr. Westfelt, has lately made a communication to the Stockholm Medical Society, containing the statistics of alcoholic abuse and its results in Sweden. He calculates that at least from 7 to 12 or 13 per cent. among males, and from 1 to 2 per cent. among females, of all cases of acquired insanity, are due to the abuse of alcohol; and in reference to its influence on progeny and race, he shows that a steady diminution of the population was coincident with a period when drunkenness was at its greatest height.

allude to these facts with the view of casting any reflection upon the poor, honest, and temperate Norfolk labourer, who may be afflicted with the calamity of having an idiot child, but I merely mention them in order that they may serve as an additional caution against habits of intemperance, and may strengthen the hands of that noble band of philanthropists who are endeavouring to check the torrent of this hideous vice in this city and county.

Before quitting the question of the cause of idiocy, I should like to say a word or two about what is technically called its histology and its pathological anatomy. What is there in the brain that makes one man a senior wrangler and another an idiot? What is it that unfits one person for the discharge of the ordinary duties of domestic and social life, and endows another with capacities adapted for a statesman, a mathematician, or a philosopher? Is it a defect in the quantity or the quality of the nervous matter of the brain? Does

it depend on a malformation of the cranium, on the size or shape of the head, or on the amount of development of the convolutions of the brain? Upon this point, I am bound to tell you that science speaks with a somewhat uncertain sound, volumes having been written upon it without any definite solution or tangible result.

It was formerly supposed that idiots always presented some obvious malformation of the cranium or skull. This is by no means necessarily the case; one of the most remarkable cases of idiocy that has come under my notice was that of a child with a well-formed head, remarkably handsome face, and well-proportioned body. It has been said by some that the power of mental expression depends on the fineness and degree of complexity of the cerebral convolutions, or on their symmetry in each hemisphere. One of the most noted writers on the subject, after stating that a number of scientific men had spent thirty years in measuring and weighing the heads of idiots, sums up their conclusions as follows :—

1st. There is no constant relation between the development of the cranium and the degree of intelligence.

2nd. The dimensions of the anterior part of the cranium, and especially of the forehead, are, at least, as great among idiots as others.\*

3rd. Three-fifths of idiots have larger heads than men of ordinary intelligence.

4th. There is no constant relation between the degree of intelligence and the weight of the brain.†

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\* The attention of the medical profession has lately been called to the obstetric aspect of idiocy, and I would refer those who take an interest in this subject to the valuable statistics of Dr. Langdon Down, which contain the result of his inquiries into the history of 2,000 cases of idiocy that have come under his observation. Of these he finds 24 per cent. were first-born children. Dr. Down then alludes to the question of the disparity in the ages of the father and mother, which does not appear to him to be very productive of idiocy.

† Dr. Hammond, Professor of Diseases of the Nervous System at Bellevue College, New York, has published some interesting statistics in reference to the relative weight of the brain, as compared with that of the body, in various classes of vertebrate animals, by which he shows that there is no definite relation

5th. Sometimes the brain of idiots presents no deviation in form, colour, and density from the normal standard; it is, in fact, perfectly normal.

After such a statement as this, I can readily imagine that some of you may say, it seems to us that you doctors really know but little about the genesis of idiocy. I am afraid this is but too true. We are only on the threshold of inquiry, and science of to-day is unable to bridge over the gulf that separates matter from mind.

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between the intelligence of animals and the absolute or relative size of the brain. Thus, he says, "the canary bird and the Arctic sparrow have brains proportionately larger than those of any other known animals, including man, and yet no one will contend that these animals stand at the top of the scale of mental development. Man, who certainly stands at the head of the class of mammals, and of all other animals, so far as mind is concerned, rarely has a brain more than one-fiftieth the weight of the body, a proportion which is much greater in several other mammals, and is, as we have seen, exceeded by many of the smaller birds."

## MATTER AND MIND.

*" Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus  
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet."*

I stated just now that the study of idiocy was of great interest to the theologian, for I can imagine no more powerful weapon for combating the materialistic tendencies of the day than is furnished by a consideration of the natural history of the idiot. This is neither the time nor the place for me to enter into the question of the mysterious connection between matter and mind, a subject which I have developed at some length in my published works.\* In my various public appeals on behalf of the

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\* "Darwinism Tested by Language," Rivington, 1877; "Aphasia or Loss of Speech," Churchills, 1870. The reader is referred to these treatises, and especially to his work on Darwinism, for a fuller exposition of the author's views, here only incidentally sketched, and also for a more complete knowledge of the scientific facts and different authorities quoted in support of the position here taken in reference to the connection between Matter and Mind.

Asylum for Idiots, I have also usually taken the opportunity of pointing out how the experience afforded by the study of idiocy is utterly opposed to the extravagant dogmas of the materialistic school, and to the crude notions which pseudo-science has engendered, and I have also shown how the results of idiot training furnish a forcible demonstration of the dualistic theory of mind and matter, upon which science reposed till the times of Spinoza, Laplace, Haeckel, Huxley, and others.

The pseudo philosophers of our time have bewildered the public mind by the wild flights of their imagination; thought, the so-called spiritual attributes of man, are merely a function of brain protoplasm; the brain, say they, secretes thought, just as the liver secretes bile, or as oxygen and sulphur produce sulphuric acid, and all the varied phenomena of nature are nothing more than the molecular changes of matter; the operations of the mind are but the products of the caudate cells of the brain, and volition and consciousness are mere

physical manifestations. They see only the physio-chemical side of nature, they utterly ignore any spiritual attribute in man, they regard metaphysics as a relic of mediæval superstition, and they assert that all mental operations are bodily functions, and simply the result of some molecular or atomic change in the brain; indeed, the German philosophers go so far as to say that life itself is only a "special and complicated act of mechanics;" that there is no real distinction between living and dead matter, and that vitality is a metaphysical ghost (*ein metaphysisches Gespenst*).\*

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\* One of the leaders of scientific thought in this country tells us that "Life is composed of ordinary matter, differing from it only in the manner in which its atoms are aggregated," and it has been gravely stated that the production of man in the chemist's retort may be recorded as one of the future discoveries of the age!

A clever French writer, commenting on these purely hypothetical statements of the "mechanistic school," makes the following appropriate remarks:—

*"Quand on nous dit que l'organisme des êtres vivans n'est qu'un laboratoire où tout se passe en combinaisons et en compositions des élémens matériels primitifs, on oublie que ce laboratoire est habité par un hôte intime, le principe*

When I had the privilege, some few months since, of pleading the cause of this Asylum at Lynn, I stated that at an international congress of psychologists held in Paris in 1878, at which I was present, a celebrated Russian professor laid before the congress the result of his elaborate experiments on the brains of idiots, and I pointed out how the professor's conclusions strongly militated against the notions of the school of philosophers of whom I have been speaking.

In order to understand the great value of Dr. Mierzejewski's investigations, I must remind you that the human brain is composed of two kinds of nerve structure of an essentially different nature, grey matter and white matter. Examined microscopically, the grey matter is found to be com-

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*vital qui ne fait qu'un avec les élémens en fusion. Ici la combinaison chimique ne se fait pas toute seule ; elle s'opère sous l'action d'une cause qui en transforme les élémens de façon à en faire un produit d'ordre nouveau qui s'appelle la vie.*"—" *La Vie et la Matière,*" par É. Vacherot, " *Revue des Deux Mondes,*" 1878.

posed of cells, while the white matter consists of fibres; their function also is different, the former being regarded as the generator of nerve force, while the latter simply serves as the medium by which this force is transmitted. As the manifestation of the intellectual powers is supposed to be in some way connected with the development of the grey matter of the cerebral convolutions, one would expect to find in idiots a deficiency of this element of brain tissue.\* Dr. Mierzejewski, who illustrated

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\* In an original and very remarkable essay, entitled "The Brain not the Sole Organ of the Mind," Dr. Hammond, of New York, says, "There is no exception to the law that mental development is in direct proportion to the amount of grey matter entering into the composition of the nervous system of any animal of any kind whatever, and that in estimating mental power, we should be influenced by the absolute and relative quantity of *grey nerve tissue*, in which respect we shall find man stands pre-eminent, although, as we have already seen, his brain, *as a whole*, is relatively much smaller than that of many other animals; and it is to this preponderance of grey matter that Man owes the great mental development which places him so far above all other living beings. As this grey tissue is not confined to the brain, but a large proportion of it is found in the ganglia of the sympathetic and some

his communication by casts of the brains of idiots, showed that this is by no means the case, and he mentioned an instance of an idiot in whose brain the surface of grey matter was enormous. So it would seem that there is no fixed relation between the amount of grey matter of the brain and intellectual power, for richness of grey substance and abundance of nerve cells may be accompanied by idiocy.

Now, as these startling statements of the Russian professor were not made in a hole and corner, but were enunciated in the presence of leading psychologists from all parts of the world, I felt myself justified in telling the materialists that they must be faced, and either answered or admitted as correct, and as my address at Lynn was

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other nerves, and as an amount second only to that of the brain in quantity—and, indeed, in some animals larger—is present as an integral constituent of the spinal cord, Dr. Hammond infers, and he cites numerous experiments in support of this inference, that mental power must be conceded to the spinal cord, and that the brain can no longer be considered as the sole organ of the mind.”

subsequently published in a leading London periodical and widely circulated, I am now justified in assuming that the inferences I then drew from these remarkable experiments cannot be controverted, and that the time has not yet arrived when the broad distinctions between mind and matter are to be obliterated, and man reduced to a mere automaton, a creature of a blind necessity.

Without unduly exaggerating the importance of Dr. Mierzejewski's experiments, it must be admitted that very great interest attaches to them at this juncture, when attention is so widely directed to the mysterious connection between matter and mind. Unhappily, instead of solving the question, the Russian professor's researches tend to shroud it in a still deeper mystery, and show that what has been termed the "slippery force of thought—the *vis vivida animæ*"—cannot be weighed in the balance ; and they fully justify the eloquent language of a recent writer when he says, "Far more transcendent than all the glories of

the universe is the mind of man. Mind is indeed an enigma, the solution of which is apparently beyond the reach of this very mind, itself the problem, the demonstrator, the demonstration, and the demonstrand."

Those who maintain that the brain is the organ of the mind, do not tell us what we are to understand by organ, brain, or mind; they seem to me to confound two things, the one with the other. In fact, they make no distinction between thought, mind, consciousness, and the *instrument* by which these attributes become externally manifested. It is true, we have no evidence to show that the mind can operate independently of the nervous system; on the contrary, all physiological data bearing upon the question of this mutual relation, go to prove that where there is no nervous system there are no mental manifestations.

Every faculty manifests itself by means of matter, but it is important not to confound the faculty with the corporeal organ upon which the external manifestation of such faculty depends. The word organ is the

name given to a part of the human frame by which we have sensation, and by means of which we do a certain act or work ; such are the organs of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. All these organs are passive, and require to be operated on *ab extra*, precisely in the same way as the musical organ, which is an instrument constructed by man, requires man's interference for the production of musical sounds.

When a musician sits down to a piano, the music cannot be said to be in the instrument, but in the soul of the performer. If the instrument be in good order, the inspiration of a Thalberg or of a Liszt will become apparent; break the cords or otherwise damage the instrument, and nothing but discordant strains is produced. Let me further illustrate this point by an allusion to the electric telegraph, by means of which ideas and words are transmitted from mind to mind with a rapidity to which ordinary language cannot attain. Now, the electrical battery may be not inaptly compared to the brain, and the

telegraph wires to the nerves which emanate from it. If the battery be out of order, or the telegraphic wires be broken, this lightning language, by which mind speaks to mind, becomes impossible. In the same way, idiocy may be considered as a disease of the instrument rather than of the performer.

I repeat it, we must take care not to confound the organ with the person who possesses these organs : the eye is not that which sees, it is only the organ by which we see ; the ear is not that which hears, it is only the organ by which we hear. Precisely in the same way and in the same sense, the brain is the organ of mind, the organ by which our mental faculties become externally manifested. That it cannot be otherwise is shewn by the results of memory. The brain is of a perishable nature, its atoms are constantly changing—there is no person who has the same brain that he had 20 years ago ; and the vivid impressions of the past are utterly inexplicable on the supposition that mental

activity is a mere function of any perishable organ like the brain, but they necessitate the conclusion that mind and body, spirit and matter, are two entirely heterogeneous substances, and that mind—the concrete *Ego*—is independent of the material organ by which its external manifestation is alone possible.\*

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\* To those who may wish to pursue this subject further, I recommend a perusal of an essay on “Materialistic Physiology,” in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* for April, 1877. In this article, the writer, Dr. Winn, seems to share my views as to the paramount importance of boldly facing this matter, thus he says:—

“The unphilosophical and extravagant dogma, that matter can think, is now so loudly and confidently asserted, and so widely spread by a numerous class of medical men and physiologists, both in this country and abroad, that the time has arrived when a doctrine so fallacious, and so fraught with danger to the best interests of society, should be fairly and carefully scrutinised. It is not by mere assertion, or the use of obscure and pedantic language, that such a theory can be established; and if it can be shown that the arguments on which it is based are shallow and speculative, words can scarcely be found too strong to censure the recklessness and folly of those who promulgate views so subversive of all morality and religion.

“The physicists have utterly failed to establish their position. They were asked to prove by inductive

THE PNEUMA, OR SPIRITUAL ATTRIBUTE OF  
THE IDIOT.

The views that I have just enumerated receive a powerful corroboration from the study of idiocy, and I am inclined to believe that the Eastern Counties' Asylum and other kindred institutions are destined to become the battle-field upon which the difficult problem of mental philosophy—the connection between Matter and Mind—is to be fought out and definitely settled.

Inasmuch as the instrument by which the

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reasoning the truth of their theory, that the universe is the mere outcome of molecular force, and their defence has been clearly proved to be of the most evasive and inconclusive character.

“The doctrines of the modern school of materialistic physiology are permeating all classes of society, and it is these doctrines, based on the assumption that mind is a mere function of the brain—an assumption that, if true, would reduce man to the level of the beasts that perish—that we are offered as a substitute for the belief in the immateriality of the mind.”

The essay from which the above quotations are taken is full of sound and logical reasoning, and the writer's position is not supported by mere *theoretical statements*, but by arguments drawn from *well-accredited facts* in anatomy and physiology.

manifestation of mind is alone possible is undoubtedly damaged in idiots, they were formerly supposed not to belong to the human family, and their place in the order of creation was disputed. All admitted that they had the *σῶμα*, or material part of our nature; they also conceded to them the *ψυχὴ*, or principle of animal life, but they considered that the *πνεῦμα*, or spirit of immortal life—that which essentially differentiates man from the brute—was absent in the idiot. This idea seemed to have been entertained by a great theologian of the 16th century, who, on being asked by a father what he was to do with his idiot boy, replied that the child might be drowned, as he possessed no soul! Times are happily changed. We don't admit the lawfulness of drowning idiots now. It is proved beyond a doubt that the unhappy idiot of the lowest kind possesses what has been called the Tripartite Nature of Man. "*Non enim est e saxo sculptus e robore dolatus, habet corpus, habet animum, movetur mente, movetur sensibus.*"

The above statement could be amply borne out by a reference to cases which have been observed in idiot asylums. I will, however, mention but two :—An idiot boy has been known to retire alone, when there was a thunderstorm, to ask God to take care of his father, who was a sailor. A little boy in the Massachusetts Asylum for Idiots was in declining health, and became during his dying illness an object of great interest to the matron and attendants. Unbidden he said his prayers frequently, and putting up his little hand, he muttered, “ Me want to go up ! me want to go up ! ” Surely he was thinking of some sort of hereafter, because he added distinctly, “ They’ll say, here comes one of the boys from the Boston School for Idiots.” The approach of death seemed to awaken his spiritual life ; out of the decaying body appeared to rise the growing soul, for after repeating the verse of a hymn, the spirit of this simple child became liberated from its earthly tenement—its material habitat—the connection between

matter and mind was severed, and to use the touching language of his biographer, "this poor little idiot boy bade a long adieu to his sorrowing friends, and doubtless there was then joy in heaven, as the recording angel wrote in the Book of Life the name of George Tobey."\*

If any apology be due for pointing out how the mysterious connection between mind and matter may be illustrated by a study of idiocy, I will observe that the subject is of such absorbing interest that it is well that it should occasionally be removed from the heated arena of biological bias, into the calmer and more judicial atmosphere of such an assembly as I have the honour to address.

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\* Cases like this would seem to illustrate the truth of the statement of that great philosopher, Sir Thomas Brown, when he says, "Thus it is observed that men sometimes, upon the hour of their departure, do speak and reason about themselves. For then the soul, being more freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like herself, and to discourse in a strain above mortality."—*Religio Medici*, p. 208.

## TREATMENT AND RESULTS.

According to the census of 1871, there are about 30,000 idiots in England and Wales ; of these it is estimated that about 3,000 cases belong to the four Eastern Counties.\*

Now let us bring this matter home to ourselves. Where are the 3,000 unhappy blighted individuals that claim the Eastern Counties for their home ? It is true that some of them are in the homes of the

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\* Of this number, it is estimated that after deducting pauper and other cases not considered suitable for this charity, there remain at least 1,000 idiots who need the benefits of the Eastern Counties' Asylum, whereas our present accommodation is limited to 99 cases ! The Board of Directors being forcibly impressed with their inability adequately to supply the wants of the district, have recently instituted a fund for the enlargement of the Asylum, so as to admit 50 more patients. For this purpose, the sum of £6,000 is required, towards which, as yet, only about £2,000 has been subscribed.

As according to the present rules, patients are admitted for a period of five years only, the Board are desirous of raising the further sum of £10,000 to constitute a Permanent Life Case Fund, in order that a certain number of idiots may be taken care of for life. Towards this fund, nearly £4,000 has already been subscribed, and there are now 10 Life Cases in the Asylum. Donations and legacies are, therefore, earnestly solicited for both these objects.

affluent, but the greater number are in the cottages of the poor, where the trouble of providing for one such member often reduces a working family to pauperism; the poor child beloved by its parents is, perhaps, loathed by their neighbours, is avoided by other children, hidden from visitors, a constant care and sorrow to the mother, a source of anxious foresight to the father; in fact, the poor idiot child is like a Upas tree, that poisons the whole atmosphere around it, and the burden of his presence in a poor man's family is a new weight added to the load that was already sinking them down. Perhaps you may say, we agree with you, we lament as you do that the narrow home of the humble artizan should be rendered intolerable by the presence of these stricken members of our race; but, we have been given to understand, that if not absolutely incurable, but very little can be done for them, that they baffle the efforts of the most zealous educators, and are almost beyond the reach of human sympathy.

Now this was the language generally used half a century ago, and a celebrated French authority on the subject, Esquirol, considered that idiots were what they must remain for the rest of their lives, and that no means were known by which a larger amount of intelligence could be developed in them. Now, I am happy to tell you, that in the broad daylight of the nineteenth century, science gives an emphatic denial to this statement. Yes, the results obtained at our own Asylum and elsewhere, show that much, very much, may be done for the unhappy idiot, who in a private house is an intolerable incubus, but who, under proper training in a suitable asylum, becomes sociable, affectionate, and happy. It has been shown that in the majority of cases, the idiot may not only cease to be a source of annoyance and danger to those around him, but by care and training he may be made able to contribute to his own sustenance; the knowledge of simple trades of a mechanical kind, such as that of a carpenter or tailor, has been reached by

some, and household industrial pursuits have fitted others for domestic usefulness.\*

A celebrated German authority, Herr Saeger, of Berlin, has stated that in his establishment he had indubitable cases of idiocy, in which the head was small and malformed, yet in which the results of education were so triumphant, that they were ultimately able to mix with the world without being recognised as idiots. Further, he tells us that in one instance a young man underwent confirmation without the priest suspecting that he had been delivered from idiocy.

It will thus be seen that science has done much for the idiot. Science will do more, for her motto is "Excelsior," and her votaries are not content to linger with

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\* Those who take an interest in the details connected with the training and general management of idiots, will find much useful information in a work entitled "The Imbecile and Idiotic," by Dr. Duncan and Mr. W. Millard, the latter of whom has been officially connected with Asylums for the Idiot since the year 1847, and to whose untiring and self-denying exertions the success of this undertaking is in a great measure due.

complacency on the heights already attained, but they look for the period when, by the powerful lever of an enlightened philanthropy, this benighted race shall be raised from the grovelling level of the brute, to the highest attainable point of bodily perfection.

I trust that I have said enough to justify an earnest appeal for sympathy with this unfortunate branch of the human family. I have endeavoured to show that a great social evil exists amongst us, and that duty and interest should alike concur to induce us to face this evil and to master it. I have endeavoured to point out how the care and training of the idiot has become one of the recognised obligations of a philanthropic public. At the Eastern Counties' Asylum, we are trying to mitigate as far as we can this great social calamity, and our efforts have hitherto been crowned with unlooked-for success.

We don't follow the advice of the mediæval theologian to whom I have

alluded. We don't drown idiots at our Asylum, but we teach them to swim against the adverse currents to which they are exposed; we buoy them up on the tempestuous waves of life; we pilot them through the rocks and shoals of their ill-starred career, till their chequered race is run, and they are safely landed in the haven of everlasting rest.

We have not only succeeded in raising these poor creatures from a state of hopeless degradation to a state of comfort and usefulness, but we have, in many instances, succeeded in kindling up in their dark and twilight minds some dim anticipations of a brighter world; the veil which obscured their intellect has been rendered transparent, and to use the language of the bard of Avon, we have been privileged to observe that—

“As the morning steals upon the night,  
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses  
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle  
Their clearer reason.”

Each person here belongs to one of two

classes. Either you have one of these unhappy beings in your own immediate circle, or you have not. If you have, you can feel all the more for those who are similarly afflicted with yourselves, but have not your means for mitigating their dire distress, and you will think of the narrow home of the humble artisan or labourer, rendered intolerable by the constant presence of one of these afflicted members of our race ; if, on the other hand, you have been spared this overwhelming calamity in your own family, you will, I am sure, consider any assistance you can render to so good a cause in the light of a thankoffering. True philanthropy never stops short of the remotest boundary of human want, and in urging upon you the claims of the Eastern Counties' Asylum for Idiots, I would have you remember that I am pleading for a class who cannot plead for themselves, and whose very silence is eloquent with an appeal for your merciful aid.

Philanthropists of the Eastern counties of England, many of you have been long

accustomed to sympathise with suffering and want ; here is another outlet for your charitable efforts. The most illustrious landowner in East Anglia has recently extended his Royal patronage to this institution, especially established for the care of idiots from the four counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Cambridgeshire. I ask you to follow his noble example ; I ask you to come and help us in our attempts to rescue a large section of the human family from the worse than Cimmerian darkness in which they have been hitherto enshrouded ; come and help us to awaken faculties hitherto dormant, to restore lost minds, to arouse these unhappy beings from a moral death to a new birth of perception and feeling ; come and help us in arousing the slumbering power to utterance, and you shall hear the once silent tongue eloquent with the outgushings of a liberated spirit.

Remember that these poor stricken individuals are members of the human family ; they are heirs with us of all that human beings may hope for from the hands

of a common Father; they possess the rudiments of all human attributes, especially the distinctive attribute of educability and of progressive improvement; they possess the *germ* of intellectual activity and of moral responsibility, and this germ—cherished and nourished by the genial warmth of human kindness, fenced round and protected from the blasts and buffetings of the world by the cords of true philanthropy, watered by the dew of human sympathy—although possibly only permitted to bud here, is destined hereafter to expand into a perfect flower, and flourish perennially in another and a better state of being.

